



VEREINTE NATIONEN
Informationsdienst

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September 1989

UNIS/INF/426

THE UNITED NATIONS AT VIENNA

Information for Visitors

I. THE UNITED NATIONS -- A BRIEF OVERVIEW

The United Nations was founded in the last months of the Second World War as a successor of the League of Nations by 51 States. The United Nations Charter was ratified by the five permanent members of the Security Council and by a majority of the remaining 46 founding States by 24 October 1945. In commemoration of this event, 24 October is celebrated each year as "United Nations Day".

Member States

Today, the United Nations consists of 159 Member States -- more than three times the number of 1945. Most of the new Members are former colonies, about 130 are developing countries. Only a few countries in the world are not UN Members. One of them is Switzerland which is, however, a member in many of the specialized agencies in the United Nations, has observer status and participates in and contributes to many of its activities.

Principal Organs

The six principal organs of the United Nations are: the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the Trusteeship Council, the International Court of Justice and the Secretariat.

Financial Aspects

The regular annual budget, which is financed by the obligatory contributions of Member States, has amounted to about \$870 million in the last few years. To this should be added over \$1.1 billion in voluntary contributions for special programmes. The entire United Nations family (including the specialized agencies) runs on a budget of about \$5.5 billion per year. Of this sum, about \$3.5 billion is covered by voluntary contributions. The United States leads the list of contributors with 25 per cent of the total regular UN budget. The Federal Republic of Germany ranks fourth with 8.08 per cent. Austria pays 0.74 per cent. Of the poorer Member States, about 80 pay the minimum contribution of 0.01 per cent.

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For comparison, it should be noted that the sum spent on world armaments in a single year would finance the total expenditures of the entire United Nations system for almost two centuries or all United Nations expenditures proper for over six centuries.

Personnel

About 14,000 persons are presently employed in the United Nations Secretariat. Of these about 11,000 are paid from the regular budget. Of the approximately 3,000 in the Professional category, more than 25 per cent are women. The reform mandate given to the Secretary-General by the General Assembly includes a reduction in the Organization's staffing by 15 per cent by the end of 1989 and an even higher reduction, of 25 per cent, in the two highest echelons. This aim has already been attained to a large extent.

The entire United Nations system, including the specialized agencies and special programmes, employs about 46,000 persons in 600 offices around the world. In Vienna, about 4,500 employees from over 100 countries work in the Vienna International Centre. They are employed by the United Nations, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). Of that number almost a third are Austrians.

II. THE VIENNA INTERNATIONAL CENTRE (VIC)

At the invitation of the Austrian Federal Government, IAEA and UNIDO established their headquarters in Vienna in 1957 and in 1967, respectively. In the 70's the Austrian Government provided a permanent residence for these two organizations, the VIC. It was designed by the Austrian architect Dipl.Ing. Johann Staber, and inaugurated on 23 August 1979. To make full use of the new Centre, other UN units were transferred from New York and Geneva to Vienna. Many of them were consolidated in the United Nations Office at Vienna (UNOV), headed by a Director-General. Transferred from Beirut to Vienna on a provisional basis was the headquarters of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

The VIC complex covers an area of 180,000 sq. metres and has extraterritorial status. It was handed over by the Austrian Government to the United Nations and the IAEA for a symbolic rent of AS 1 per year for a period of 99 years. Maintenance costs for the Centre are born by the UN Organizations.

Since its opening, well over 600 conferences and meetings have been held at the VIC. According to official Austrian estimates, the local economy benefits, directly or indirectly, by more than AS 4 billion per year from the spending of UN organizations in Vienna. This amount included the administration expenditures, (e.g. purchase of paper, office furniture and equipment), the personal expenditures of the more than 4,000 staff members and, last but not least, the money spent by conference delegates for hotels, shopping, etc.

III. THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

A. United Nations Organizations (Staff: about 450)

(i) United Nations Office at Vienna

UNOV The United Nations Office at Vienna is headed by a Director-General, at present Margaret J. Anstee of the United Kingdom. She is the personal representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations in Vienna. The Director-General also heads the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs (see below) and co-ordinates all United Nations drug control-related programmes. Thus, all United Nations activities on social policy and social development are consolidated in Vienna. UNOV also administers the Security and Safety Service for the entire VIC community and carries out administrative tasks for all Vienna-based UN units. It provides some services for UNIDO as well (for instance Interpretation and Meetings Planning Service).

Services

UNIS The United Nations Information Service in Vienna is responsible for all public information activities of the Vienna-based UN units and serves at the same time as information centre for Austria, the Federal Republic of Germany and Hungary.

UNPA The United Nations Postal Administration promotes the aims and ideas of the United Nations and its specialized agencies through UN postal stamps and maintains a philatelic sales counter in the VIC.

Substantive Units

CSDHA The Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, made up of the Divisions of Social Development and Advancement of Women, deals with the many dimensions of social development, with special emphasis on government policy. It covers issues like the status of women, social integration and participation, youth, aging, disabled persons, the role of the family in development, migrant workers, crime prevention and criminal justice. In recent years, the Centre has organized a number of International Years and world conferences. At the moment, it runs the United Nations Decade for Disabled Persons (1983 - 1992).

DND The Division of Narcotic Drugs acts as secretariat to, and executive arm of, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, the main United Nations policy-making body on international drug control. It provides advisory and support services to Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. The Division organized the preparatory work for the Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, which was adopted in December 1988, and the International Conference on Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking (Vienna, June 1987).

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INCB The Secretariat of the International Narcotics Control Board serves this treaty-based body which is in charge of the review and implementation by Member States of international conventions on drugs.

Fund

UNFDAC The United Nations Fund for Drug Abuse Control, a trust fund supported entirely by voluntary contributions, is the major source of financing for technical programmes in the field of drug abuse control. The fund assists developing countries to take a full range of anti-narcotic actions, including prevention and public information, treatment and rehabilitation of drug-dependent persons as well as integrated rural development/crop substitution activities and the control of illicit drug trafficking.

The Special Representative

Works for the international awareness of the problems of the Disabled and the objectives of the Decade; he advises Member States on this issue and promotes fund-raising activities for "Disabled projects" -- particularly in developing countries.

Other UN-offices/agencies in Vienna

UNRWA The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East runs schools, clinics and relief services for 2.2 million Palestine refugees living in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Due to the unstable situation in Lebanon, the UNRWA headquarters has been temporarily relocated from Beirut to Vienna and Amman. UNRWA has a staff of about 230 in Vienna and 17,500 in the Near East.

ITLB The International Trade Law Branch of the Office of Legal Affairs provides the secretariat for the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL), a body of the General Assembly working on the progressive harmonization of international trade law.

UNSCEAR The secretariat for the Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation is part of the United Nations Environmental Programme. The secretariat regularly publishes special studies which are submitted to the General Assembly.

UNHCR The branch office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has been based in Vienna since 1951. It co-operates with the Austrian Government in the procedure for determining the refugee status of asylum seekers and contributes towards the achievement of durable solutions.

ILO/
MATCOM Material and Techniques for Co-operative Management Training is one of the special projects of the International Labour Organization (ILO) for developing countries.

B. International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)
(Staff: about 1,900)

The IAEA was established in 1957 as an autonomous member of the United Nations system. Its objectives are to accelerate and expand the contribution of atomic energy to peace, health and prosperity throughout the world and to ensure that materials, services and equipment made available by it, or at its request, or under its supervision or control, are not used in such a way as to further any military purpose. A major activity is thus the application of safeguards to nuclear materials. Increasingly the Agency also advises Governments on nuclear safety, on the physical protection of nuclear materials, and on the many uses of nuclear techniques in areas as diverse as medicine, agriculture, industry and water resource management.

C. United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)
(Staff: about 1,400)

UNIDO was established in 1966 and became a specialized agency within the United Nations system in 1986. Its primary objective is to promote and accelerate industrial development in the developing countries with a view to assisting in the establishment of a new international economic order. Special programmes are: the system of consultations; investment co-operation; transfer of technology; energy for industry; economic and technical co-operation among industrial enterprises in both developed and developing countries; the Industrial Development Decade for Africa; assistance to the least developed countries; and the integration of women in industrial development.

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